

NEWSWEEK

2 December 1985

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 49

A Chinese Agent in the CIA?

Officials also charge that a Navy analyst spied for Israel

For 40 years he seemed a loyal, valuable employee of various U.S. military and intelligence arms—including the CIA. But last Saturday Larry Wu-tai Chin, 63, became the first U.S. citizen ever charged with spying for the People's Republic of China. Chin stood impassively during his bail hearing in federal court in Alexandria, Va., although a conviction could mean life in prison. If the charges against him are true, Chin may also hold the dubious distinction of being the longest surviving foreign double agent in U.S. intelligence.

Chin's arrest was just the latest revelation in a seemingly endless series of embarrassing espionage scandals. Two days earlier, with the FBI hot on his trail, Navy counterintelligence specialist Jonathan Jay Pollard raced across Washington for the safety of a foreign embassy. But his destination was not the Soviet compound. Instead, Pollard was arrested by FBI agents just before he tried to enter the Israeli Embassy. He, too, was accused of selling classified documents to a foreign power—although Israel is a staunch U.S. ally. A day later Pollard's wife was arrested for possession of classified documents.

As the nation's espionage woes have mounted in recent months, the emphasis has been on penetration by likely Soviet-bloc agents: the Walker spy family and the disappearance of onetime CIA employee Edward Lee Howard. But both the Chin and Pollard cases demonstrated that espionage is more than a bipolar game with the Soviet Union. The United States government routinely shares classified information with the Israelis and has, in recent years, fostered cordial relations with the Chinese. But warns a senior intelligence official: "There's an old saw in the intelligence business that there aren't any friends. There are just degrees of enemies."

Born in China, but now a naturalized U.S. citizen, Chin was originally approached by the communists in 1943 or 1944, according to a detailed FBI affidavit. He was employed at the time by the U.S. Army liaison mission in Fuzhou, China, and later became an interpreter at the U.S. Consulate in Shanghai. After the revolution Chin retreated with the Americans to Hong Kong in 1950. The PRC allegedly first paid Chin in 1952 for information on the location of Chinese POW's in Korea. The FBI claims that Chin received \$140,000 over the next

33 years—most of which he kept in a bank account in Hong Kong.

Chin joined the CIA in Okinawa in 1952 and began a 29-year career with the Foreign Broadcast Information Service analyzing foreign radio programs. In 1967 Chin allegedly began regular meetings with PRC controllers in Hong Kong. Some intelligence sources doubt that an FBIS employee would ordinarily learn much of strategic importance. But Chin's value may have increased in 1970 when he was made the FBIS's officer for foreign documents—a post that may have given him information about U.S. assets in China.

Secret career? Even after Chin retired from the CIA in 1981, the government alleges, payoffs continued—including \$50,000 on a 1982 trip to Peking. Just why they began tracking Chin in December 1983 the FBI would not say. But it may be that Chin himself saw his secret career coming to an end. Three months earlier, according to the FBI, he helped the PRC identify another FBIS analyst as someone who might spy for them.

Even before Chin's arrest, the Pollard affair last week had further highlighted the need for better security throughout the government. "It once again reinforces the need for immediate action on the numerous proposals for improvement in counterintelligence," said Sen. David Durenberger, who chairs the Select Committee on

Intelligence. But all the previous spy scandals have already prompted some reforms, and Pollard's apprehension was at least partly a result of the recent increase in sensitivity to security breaches.

Pollard, 31, began working for the Navy in 1979 and since 1983 has been an analyst for a counterterrorism unit with extensive interests in the Middle East. In early November Pollard's fellow employees noticed he was seeking access to classified documents unrelated to his work. The Naval Investigative Service began to monitor him and later called in the FBI. After Pollard's arrest, government sources said he confessed to working for the Israelis.

There were suggestions that Israel might have wanted the codes needed to decipher communications between U.S. ships in the Mediterranean, perhaps to double-check information officially shared by U.S. agencies. Sensitive to Israeli embarrassment, however, some U.S. officials began to speculate that Pollard may actually have been recruited by KGB agents posing as Israelis—a classic "false flag" operation. There was no easy way to test that theory, but Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres took the Pollard case seriously enough to schedule government meetings on it, another reminder that in the world of espionage nothing may be what it seems.

WALTER SHAPIRO with RICHARD SANDZA and KIM WILLENSON in Washington

'In intelligence, there aren't any friends': Chin in custody at his weekend court hearing

CHARLES TASNADI—AP

